

U.S. Embassy to Azerbaijan

Ambassador Richard Morningstar

Press Availability

Information and Communication Technologies Forum

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Ambassador Morningstar: This ICT forum is an example of U.S.-Azerbaijan cooperation and is being sponsored by the U.S.-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce. And, as you know, information and communications technology is an important segment that will be developed to help diversify Azerbaijan's economy.

Minister Abbasov was here speaking as well to the group and his ministry is doing a lot to expand the information and communications technology segment.

There are American companies who are now participating in Azerbaijan and there were many American companies at this conference who would like to participate. Azerbaijan has the possibility of playing an important role in this region in the ICT area and we hope very much and think very much that cooperation between American and Azerbaijani companies can help this develop.

Media: [Through Interpreter]. How much investment has already been made and what kind of challenges are there in this cooperation?

Ambassador Morningstar: I don't know how many dollars or manats at this point have been invested, but I do know there have been significant funds invested by some companies. And I do know there are tremendous opportunities.

I do think that there are three important areas where there can be improvements here in Azerbaijan which will help the development of this sector of the economy.

One is the further development of intellectual property rights legislation. A second area is customs and tax reform. And a third area is to continue on the road to WTO accession.

There's a so-called ITA or Information Technology Agreement that is governed by the WTO. If Azerbaijan accedes to the WTO and becomes a member or participant in that ITA agreement, that ultimately would help create significant exports for Azerbaijan in the information technology area.

Media: [Through Interpreter]. Is it planned to sign any kind of agreement within this forum?

Ambassador Morningstar: I don't know that there are any agreements to be signed within this specific forum. This is an opportunity for businesses to speak together, get to know each other, and maybe begin to work on future agreements.

Last year, I signed with Minister Abbasov a memorandum of cooperation and this event, as well as other activities, are part of that cooperation which will continue and increase.

Media: [Through Interpreter]. If Azerbaijan's state telecommunication companies will be privatized, will U.S. companies be interested in purchasing part of it?

Ambassador Morningstar: I can't speak for U.S. companies but, depending on how that takes place, I'm sure there would be some interest.

Media: [Through Interpreter]. Was there any suggestions made by U.S. companies regarding the upcoming second and third Azerbaijan satellite launches?

Ambassador Morningstar: I know this is an area where U.S. companies are very interested and are in conversations with the Azerbaijani government and in fact our Trade Development Agency is doing a feasibility study with respect to the second AzerCosmos satellite.

Thank you very much.

Media: [Through Interpreter]. What do you think about the development of the Azerbaijani ICT sector and Minister Abbasov's role in that development?

Ambassador Morningstar: I think that both are very positive. I think that Minister Abbasov is doing a great job in his role as Minister of Information and Telecommunications. I think he has some very progressive ideas. And I think there's a really good future in general for the ICT sector here in Azerbaijan.

Media: [Through Interpreter]. Could you please share your opinions regarding the impressions on the recent development in the ICT sphere, especially the dynamics of the development, the trends of development in the ICT sphere?

Ambassador Morningstar: Again, I think it's very positive. I think the role that American companies have played, for example, in the first communications satellite with AzerCosmos has been very positive. We're looking at a second satellite where the U.S. Trade Development Agency is doing a feasibility study. Other companies are getting very much involved and are involved in conferences like this will also create I think further opportunities in this sector.

Thank you.